

ERROR ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ESSAYS AT ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION FACULTY

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to know the number of errors produced in students' essay, the most frequent error, and the reason why the errors occurred. 37 students taken by using cluster sampling technique were the fourth semester students of the English Study Program, 2012 academic year, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Tadulako University. Furthermore, the data collection was done through triangulation technique. 553 errors were found in this study covering 241 errors of grammar, 307 errors of mechanics, and 5 errors of organization. In her research, the researcher took students' essays twice. At the first section (1st essay), the researcher found 41.9% errors in grammar, 56.7% errors in mechanics, and 1.4% errors in organization. Next, from the second section (2nd essay), she found 45.5% errors in grammar, 54.2% errors in mechanics, and 0.4% error in organization. The most frequent error was mechanics. The sources of students' errors found in this research are inter-lingual, intra-lingual error, other errors (internal and external).

Keywords: Error Analysis; Essay; Inter-lingual Error; Intra-lingual Error

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a basic feature of social life, and language is its component. Language is a means of communication that people use to convey their ideas, opinions, thoughts, and feelings to other human beings all over the world. Thompson (2003:37) defines, "language, then, refers to the use of a system of units which, in combination, provide meaningful communication. Such units may be words, sentences, or whole text." In order to make the communication run well, everyone should master three components and four skills of language. The three components that should be familiar are vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. They are needed to know in order to produce some utterances correctly. These components can support someone's ability in applying four skills of language. These skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

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The skill focused in this research is writing. Writing is a process of thinking and showing the writers' ideas through written expression. There are two kinds of writing: fiction and non-fiction. The fiction one is a kind of imaginative writing. On the other hand, the second one is writing made based on the real situation. In this research, the researcher only discussed about non-fiction one especially essay. Crews in Tagg (2000) argues that a fairly brief writing in non-fiction is an essay. In constructing the essay, the essayist tries to make a point in an interesting way based on its purpose.

Writing essay has been taught since junior high school until university level as stated in curriculum with different level of difficulty. In teaching and learning process, the students are not only taught about theory of essay but also practice to make an essay. Unfortunately, many students assume that writing is the most difficult skill. It is because writing an essay is a hard working which forces someone to think critically. Thompson (2003) assumes, "the written word is not as simple matter." Even though writing becomes the crucial skill, but it is needed to be mastered. McCrimon in Dekrius (2006) writes that a hard work in communication is writing, but it is also opportunity; to convey something about yourself, to communicate your ideas, and to learn something you did not know. Because writing process especially writing an essay becomes important but difficult thing, many students create error in it. It might be because many writing rules that should be obeyed. The errors made are not only in grammar but also in many other aspects like organization and mechanics.

When the students can reduce error and write essay properly, they can make whole scientific writings correctly because essay is a part of scientific writing. Creating some scientific writings is a formal part of university level no matter what major you choose. Students at other universities as well as all students at Tadulako University are responsible for making numerous papers. In addition, every student also obligates to make some academic writing products, such as final project proposal, journals, and skripsi before they get the undergraduate degree.

Regarding to the explanation above, the researcher was encouraged to conduct research in order to analyze the errors on form of students' essay writing. In this research, she only focused on descriptive essay. Oshima & Hogue (1997:50) offer the following argument:

Descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and/or sounds. A good description is like a "word picture"; the reader can imagine the object, place, or person, in his or her mind. A writer of the good

description is like an artist who paints a picture that can be “seen” clearly in the mind of the reader.

Analyzing errors of organization, grammatical construction, and mechanics of essay especially descriptive one are good first step to encourage students to create best scientific writing products. This research was conducted in the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program, 2012 academic year, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Tadulako University.

In this analysis, there were some questions answered, such as how many errors produced by students?, which error produced the most?, and why the errors occur? Based on these questions, she wanted to know the number of error, the most frequent one, and the reason why the errors occurred by analyzing error in grammar, mechanics, and organization in students’ essay. Shan-Ling (2012:1125) argues, causes of error are divided by three parts roughly:

(1) inter-lingual errors: The learners bring the habits of mother tongue into target language, which leads to negative language transfer; (2) intra-lingual errors: This kind of errors are caused by the learners’ wrong understanding about the rules of target language or by incomplete learning; and (3) other errors: errors in improper teaching or learning materials; in cultural habits of target language; in pronunciation and words; and in usage, expressions, and style. This shows language acquisition is a creative process of constantly making errors. Students will make progress in language by making errors and correcting them.

In Shin-Ling argument above, there are three factors that can cause error. The third factor, other errors, can be divided by two division namely internal factor and external factor. Dimiyati and Mudjiono in Toha (2013:2) stated as follows:

Problems in learning can be caused by both internal and external factors. The *Internal Factors* include students’ attitude toward learning, motivation, concentration, self-confidence, intelligence, and study habit, while The *External Factors* include the teachers’ attitudes, teaching and learning facilities, learning environment, and curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

This research was descriptive quantitative research conducted to analyze the error in descriptive essay. The participants of this research were the fourth semester students in English Study program of Tadulako University. The fourth semester students were divided into five parallel classes: A, B, C, D, and E. Therefore, by applying cluster technique, the researcher only took students in one class to be the participants of her research.

In order to get the accurate data, the researcher used triangulation which one instrument, namely document, was as a main one and others were the supporting instruments. It is explained as follows:

1) Document

In this way, the researcher collected data by taking some documents. Those documents were writing products from the participants, and some books that contain related statement, theory, and the likes. They were used to give rational data.

2) Questionnaire

Questionnaire was given to the participants in order to look for additional data that could support the data which had been found through document technique. It was needed because some students would not answer obviously in the interview sometimes. The questions in this questionnaire were written in form of multiple choices.

3) Interview

In this research, the researcher acted as interviewer and 10 students became the interviewee. Interview technique would be used by the researcher to know why the errors occurred. She interviewed the participant through focus group interview. Before doing the interview, she made list of questions that would be asked to them. In this case, she did the serious but enjoyable interview. The interviewer made some notes and a recording based on interview guideline in terms of questions list that would be given to the 10 students that acted as interviewee.

After doing data collection process, the researcher analyzed the result of interview and document by using analytic descriptive method. In other words, the researcher described the data in a sequence through narrative form. There were some components that should be understood. They were reducing data, assessing data, and concluding data. The data analysis was conducted through inductive method, from collecting data in the location until concluding them into a written form. In order to show the number of errors, the researcher also converted the result of error found into percentage.

In accumulating data through document technique, the researcher counted then she categorized the errors into three categories: grammar (G), mechanics (M), and organization (O). After accumulating the analyzed score of each point, the researcher counted the percentage of error for each category by using formula proposed by Sudjono(1989:79) as follows:

$$P = \frac{F}{n} \times 100$$

Where:

P = Percentage of difficulty

F = frequency of students' incorrect answers

n = number of students answer

Referring to the formula above, there is point "n" means number of students answer. In this research, the researcher only counted the number of students' incorrect answer because this is error analysis. Because the researcher took the essay twice, in this research, there was a percentage result of error for each section. Then, to find out the mean score from both of percentages, the researcher used formula proposed by Arikunto (1993:220) as follows:

$$My = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

My = mean score

$\sum x$ = the sum of score

N = number of students

FINDINGS

1) The Number of Error Found & The Most Frequent Error

Based on the scope of research, the researcher focused her research on error of grammar, mechanics, and organization of essay. The students wrote the essay based on the topic that the lecturer determined, "My Beloved Mother". The process of writing this essay was made twice. Frequency of errors in the first essay can be seen in the table 2. In this table, she measured the errors per each category. Then, she accumulated the frequency of error per each student. Then, the frequent of errors from second essay can be seen in table 3. In this section, she counted the through same way as in table 2. After counting the error from each type, the researcher counted the total error from three categories from both products. It can be seen in table 4.

Table 2
Frequency of Error (1st essay)

No.	Students	Types of Error			Frequency of Error
		G	M	O	
1.	AS	4	7	-	11
2.	EN	5	9	-	14
3.	Z	2	5	-	7
4.	RFA	8	1	1	10
5.	YC	2	4	-	6
6.	AW	5	2	-	7
7.	RDP	-	-	-	0
8.	AL	1	-	-	1
9.	RA	3	3	-	6
10.	M	3	7	-	10
11.	AV	6	3	-	9
12.	DF	4	15	-	19
13.	NS	3	4	-	7
14.	L	4	6	-	10
15.	R	1	3	-	4
16.	MA	1	3	1	5
17.	N	1	2	-	3
18.	MU	3	1	-	4
19.	R	8	1	-	9
20.	IN	5	4	1	10
21.	Y	4	1	-	5
22.	Y	-	1	-	1
23.	MI	4	6	-	10
24.	N	6	1	-	7
25.	DAP	1	-	-	1
26.	A	3	1	1	5
27.	DK	7	2	-	9
28.	F	2	1	-	3
29.	H	4	1	-	5
30.	IS	5	-	-	5
31.	AN	1	-	-	1
32.	UK	-	5	-	5
33.	DNI	2	1	-	3
34.	N	4	4	-	8
35.	A	1	3	-	4
36.	IS	4	5	-	9
37.	Y	4	1	-	5
Total error		121	164	4	289

Table 3
Error frequency (2nd essay)

No.	Students	Types of Error			Frequency of Error
		G	M	O	
1.	AS	6	8	-	14
2.	EN	2	2	-	4
3.	Z	2	6	-	8
4.	RFA	8	2	-	10
5.	YC	2	1	-	3
6.	AW	2	-	-	2
7.	RDP	1	-	-	1
8.	AL	1	-	-	1
9.	RA	3	1	-	4
10.	M	1	1	-	2
11.	AV	1	-	-	1
12.	DF	4	10	-	14
13.	NS	7	14	-	21
14.	L	3	8	-	11
15.	R	3	1	-	4
16.	MA	1	2	-	3
17.	N	1	6	-	7
18.	MU	8	12	-	20
19.	R	1	3	-	4
20.	IN	7	1	-	8
21.	Y	6	8	-	14
22.	Y	1	4	-	5
23.	MI	4	7	-	11
24.	N	2	3	-	5
25.	DAP	-	1	-	1
26.	A	-	-	-	0
27.	DK	6	3	-	9
28.	F	3	5	-	8
29.	H	3	2	-	5
30.	IS	5	4	-	9
31.	AN	3	4	-	7
32.	UK	1	5	-	6
33.	DNI	1	2	-	3
34.	N	11	8	-	19
35.	A	4	1	1	6
36..	IS	2	6	-	8
37.	Y	4	2	-	6
Total error		120	143	1	264

Table 4
Total Error in Both Products

No	Types of Error	Total error (1 st essay)	Total Error (2 nd essay)
1.	Grammar	121	120
2.	Mechanics	164	143
3.	Organization	4	1

Regarding to the total error in table 2, it can be seen that the errors in mechanics became the most frequent one. The interval between total error of mechanics both in the first and the second essay was only 21 errors. The next frequent one was grammar. The result of error found was almost the same. The last one was organization which had been classified as the lowest frequent error in both products.

After counting all the data, the researcher counted the mean score of error. It was counted by using formula: ($My = \sum x / N$). **My** stands for mean score, $\sum x$ stands for total error from 1st to 2nd essay, and **N** refers to the number of students. The result of counting could be seen in table 5.

Table 5
Mean of Errors

No	Types of Error	Total error (1 st essay)	Total error (2 nd essay)	Mean ($My = \sum x / N$)
1.	Grammar	121	120	6.5
2.	Mechanics	164	143	167.9
3.	Organization	4	1	0.1
Number of students (N)		37		

By using the mean score formula, the researcher counted mean score by looking for the sum of total error in both the first and the second essay in each category. Then, she divided the result to 37 based on the number of students acted as participants in this research. Referring to the result of mean score above, it can be seen that the highest mean score was mechanics. Then, it was followed by grammar, and the last one was organization. Those were the result from document analyzed in this research which can be answered the first and the second questions in problem statement.

2) The Reasons Why the Errors Occurred

Based on the result of data analysis of the students' essay writing, it appeared that all the students have difficulties in writing essays. Therefore, to look for the reason why the errors occurred, the researcher distributed the questionnaire and conducted interview to the

10 interviewee. There were 10 questions in each instrument. The result for each question is as follow:

1. I: *Do you like writing?*

P: 20% students argued not at all, 30% said like it sometimes, and 50% said yes.

2. I: *Do you like writing an English essay?*

P: 10% said yes, 90% said no. However, 30% said like to write fiction one.

3. I: *How often do you write essay at home?*

P: 10% said rarely, and 90% said never.

4. I: *In your opinion, what kind of difficulty did you face in writing essay?*

P: 20% said nothing, 50% said that it was difficult to look for the idea, and 30% said that the difficulty was in developing the idea in writing process.

5. I: *How do you solve it?*

P: 40% said that they searched it in the internet, 10% said making outline, 40% said they discussed it to their friends, and 10% said solved it through mapping.

6. I: *Have you ever faced difficulty in translating you writing from Indonesian language to English?*

P: 100% said yes.

7. I: *What did you do if you could not translate it by yourself?*

P: 10% said paraphrasing it, 90% said translating through Google translate or dictionary.

8. I: *After learning how to make an essay in Writing III subject, do you think your writing ability has evolved?*

P: 100% said yes.

9. I: *In your point of view, which one is the most difficult one, constructing grammar, mechanics or organization?*

P: 70% said organization, 30% said grammar, and 10% said mechanics.

10. I: *if you got problem in writing essay, whom did you discuss to?*

P: 80% said they asked to their friends, and 10% said they asked to their senior, and 10% said they asked to their lecturer.

Based on the result of interview above, the researcher can conclude that error always occurred in their writing because they were not interested in writing subject and in making academic writing. Their reason was because in creating the academic writing, there are many rules that should be obeyed. Yet, they could solve their problem because many tools can be used nowadays. They translated their sentences by using translation machine like

Google translate sometimes. Unfortunately, they did not correct the grammar. Therefore, it caused the error. In addition, in this interview, they said that one of difficult thing was organizing the essay. Most of them said that they discussed their difficulty with their friends. They said that they enjoyed discussing it with their friends rather than to their lecturer or senior at campus. Furthermore, by seeing the result of error found, the researcher assumed that it could happen because most of students never learnt how to write an essay. It could be their first experience to write an essay. Therefore, they made some errors in their essay writing.

Based on the result of questionnaire, the researcher argued that half of students did not have prior knowledge about writing essay. This case can be caused by several reasons. Firstly, it was because they did not study about writing essay in Writing I and II subject at previous semester. Secondly, it was because they did not urge themselves to learn how to construct an essay. Thirdly, when they were interviewed, they also said that writing makes them exhausted whether they were in writing down process or in developing the idea into some paragraphs. Finally, the researcher found that the students' habitual action was always asking to their friends when they are difficult to write.

Even though the students were interested in the teaching technique, understood that writing essay is important, and even knew all rules of writing essay given, they still could not write descriptive essay properly. It happened in this research because they rarely studied at home. Furthermore, one of the difficulties in expressing idea is translating their sentences into the target language. In the interview, many of them said that they used dictionary to translate the difficult word. In addition, less of them said that they use machine translation like Google translate to translate the difficult sentence. Therefore, the researcher assumed that this process influenced the grammatical error in the students' essay writing. It was because this tool does not provide grammatical sentences. This statement is supported by Fromkin, et al. (1996:490) argument: "the 'translation' decoding program consisted of 'matching' the morphemes of the input sentence with those of the target language. Unfortunately, what often happened was a process called by early machine translator *language in, garbage out*".

Moreover, she found 94.5% students did not discuss their problem to their lecturer. When the researcher interviewed the students, most of them also agreed that they only discuss to their friends about their writing that have same problem. Those are some reasons that have answered third question in problem statement.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research problem, the researcher investigated three items such as the number of error produced by the students, the most frequent error, and the reason why the error occurred. She only took one type of essays: descriptive essay. In analyzing process, she focused on error in three components of writing such as grammar, mechanics, and organization. In this case, she took the students' essay twice. Therefore, there were two results that converted into percentage.

There was a surprising thing that the researcher found in this research about the highest error. At the first time, she thought and even so many people surround her guessed that the highest error would be found was error in using grammar. On the other hand, by analyzing the table 4 and 5, the researcher believed that the highest frequent error made in writing descriptive essay was an error in the use of mechanics. Then, it was followed by error in using grammar. Lastly, the lowest frequency is error in organization.

After accumulating the data from the first essay, the researcher converted the total error per each category into percentage. The percentage of error in grammar was 41.9%. Then, error in mechanics was the highest one namely 56.7%. It can be seen the interval between error in mechanics and grammar were only 15%. Finally, organization became the lowest one because its percentage of error was less than 2%. It was 1.4%. Furthermore, the researcher counted the percentage of result in the second essay as well. The errors also counted as simple as counting the errors in the first essay. Error in grammar was 45.5%. Then, error in mechanics was 54.2%. Lastly, error in organization was 0.4%. It can be seen that error in mechanics still became the most frequent error.

By analyzing the percentage of both products, the researcher argued that more than 50% errors were the error in mechanics. This percentage can support the statement above which said that error in mechanics was the most frequent error in this research. Then, the interval of grammar percentage between first essay and second essay were only 3.6%. Finally, the interval of organization percentage from both products became the lowest because it was only 1%.

Based on the observation, the researcher found an article which related to this research's topic. The previous article entitled "The Effect of EFL Learners Mother Tongue on Their Writing in English: An Error Analysis Study" is a research article from journal of college of arts, University of Basrah. It was conducted by Ridha (2012). There were many differences and similarities between this research and the previous research.

Firstly, similar to result of Ridha's research which was conducted in Basrah University, Iraq, mechanical and grammatical error also became the most serious and frequent ones in this research. In previous research, the previous researcher found 517 grammatical errors of 1767 total error, while in this research, the researcher found 241 grammatical errors of 553 total error. Moreover, the recent researcher found 337 errors in mechanics, while the researcher found 307 grammatical errors in this research. Shortly, in the recent research, grammatical error was more frequent than mechanical error. In contrast, in this research, mechanical error was more frequent rather than grammatical error. It could be caused by the difference in total number of participant of research in both researches. Ridha took 80 students, while the researcher took 37 students as participants.

Another difference found was in the factor that caused the error. The previous finding revealed that the students' essay writings were influenced by L1 transfer (inter-lingual error). They relied on their L1 when they wanted to express their ideas, error in using verb for instance. At the first time, the recent researcher assumed that inter-lingual error was the main factor caused the error. However, when she investigated it through questionnaire and interview, she believed that the main factor caused error was internal factor. It was because most of the students' answer came from their attitude problem, such as low motivation in learning, lack of self-confidence in discussing their difficulty to the lecturer, and lack of study habit.

The similarity was found in finding of omission and addition error. In both researches, it was found that the most error occurred in students' writing essay was omission error in using verb. In Ridha's research, she found many students could not write correct negative and interrogative sentence written in simple present and simple past tense. However, in this research, the recent researcher found many students produced omission error in constructing affirmative sentence written in simple present tense.

In short, the researcher can conclude that most of the result between Ridha's research and hers are different. It can be seen in the number of error found. The total error from previous research was greater than the total error from recent research. Then, the most frequent error was different also. Finally, some differences and similarity found in the searching the reason why the error occurred.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This research attempted to identify, to describe, to categorize, and to analyze the error in descriptive essay writing produced by the fourth semester students in English Education Study Program, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Tadulako University. In this research, the researcher found the answer of three questions. The first was *how many errors produced by the students?* There were 553 errors found in this study including 241 errors of grammar, 307 errors of mechanics, and 5 errors of organization. This result was the total errors from both products.

The second question was *what error produced the most?* The researcher found that the most frequent error was addressed to mechanics. It can be seen in the percentage of error. In the first section (the first essay), the researcher found 41,9% error in grammar, 56.7% error in mechanics, and 1.4% error in organization from 37 essays. In addition, from the second section (the second essay), she also found 45.5% error in grammar, 54.2% error in mechanics, and 0.4% error in organization.

The last question was *why the error occurred?* The researcher found 4 factors caused the errors. They were inter-lingual error, intra-lingual error, internal factor, and external factor. After analyzing the error through document, she found that inter-lingual error was the main case of error. However, after analyzing the error through questionnaire and interview, she believed that the main case caused error was internal factor because many cases came from the students' attitude problem.

Based on the result of research posted in previous part, the researcher found many problems which should be solved. Therefore, in this section, she offers some suggestions. Firstly, the most frequent error found were error in mechanics and grammar. Therefore, the researcher suggests the lecturers of structure subject to give more attention to some students who are still low in this subject. It is because if they do not master structure, they will get difficulty when enrolling the writing III subject.

Subsequently, many people thought that error in grammar is the most frequent so that they give more attention to grammar. In contrary, in this research, the researcher found error in mechanics is the most frequent one. Therefore, it will be better if every educator also gives more attention to mechanics of writing produced by the students.

In addition, for every lecturer of writing, it is better if the students are taught to make outline before asking them to make an essay. Based on the research result, outlining taught by the lecturer could decrease the students' error. Even though the researcher did not give any treatment in this research, their error could be decreased by learning from the outline.

Actually, the lecturer only showed the students the outline from essay that they made. Therefore, they learned from that outline. Eventually, they can decrease their error whether error in grammar, mechanics, or organization. It can be seen in the percentage of the first and the second essay in chapter four. Consequently, the researcher thinks that the error in writing essay of the next semester students can be avoided if the lecturers will give example and explanation after giving the outline like in this class.

Regarding to the result of questionnaire and interview, the researcher found that most of students always discuss their problem in writing to their friends. The researcher thinks that the lecturer should make a group discussion. After explaining the way to make an essay, the lecturer should open the group discussion for the students. Nevertheless, the lecturer should control that discussion. As a consequence, when there is problem of writing that cannot be solved, they can clarify it directly to their lecturer.

Error analysis is considered essential to be applied in the classroom by the lecturer especially lecturer of writing. Therefore, the next advice is the lecturer could give feedback based on the error analyzed. It is because by getting the feedback, students were not only accustomed the theory of making essay but also can recognize and even solve their error in their own writings. In addition, by giving feedback, the students will be triggered to make their writing better because they have known which one should be corrected.

For the next researcher, it will be better to conduct error analysis research that focused on mechanics and grammar of essay only. Yet, the next researcher should conduct it in the experimental research design. Consequently, the researcher will not only investigate whether the mechanical error is the most frequent than grammatical error or not, but also the next researcher can find out whether error analysis can decrease the error of students or not in research process.

Finally, four factors mentioned above can cause the students' error. One of the errors made was the students' error in using translation machine or electronic dictionary to translate the difficult words. They did not correct the grammar after translating it. Eventually, their writing becomes ungrammatical because electronic dictionary does not correct the grammar of writing. Therefore, the researcher suggests to all the students to correct the grammar of their writing if they translate it by using electronic dictionary. It is because when they can construct grammar well, they will create a good essay.

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